This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

SACRED OCCULTISM SERIES

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST AND THE ATONEMENT

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

SACRED OCCULTISM SERIES

Uniform in Binding with This Volume

Recurring Earth-Lives, How and Why: Reincarnation Described and Explained.

The Spiritual Life: How to Attain it and Prepare Children for it.

The Return of the World-Teacher. (*In Preparation.*)

The Mystery of the Self and the Houses it Lives in. (*In Preparation.*)

The Occult Meaning of Prayer and Some Great Symbols. (*In Preparation.*)

The Dynamics of Self-Development, or Finding the Master. (*In Preparation.*)

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST AND THE ATONEMENT

978

BY

F. MILTON WILLIS

Fellow of the Theosophical Society: Member of the Order of the Star in the East; Member of the Karma and Reincarnation Legion

NEW YORK

E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

681 FIFTH AVENUE

17

TO NEW YORK
PUBLIC LIBRARY
156103A
ASTOR, LENOX AND
TILDEN FOUNDATIONS
R 1924 L

Copyright, 1922
by
E. P. DUTTON & COMPANY

All Rights Reserved

Printed in the United States of America

To My Friend

ZOLTAN DE TAKACH GYÖNGYÖSHALÁSZY

Musician and Astrologer

There is even no Religion higher than Truth

SACRED OCCULTISM

OCCULTISM—

the science of the hidden side of Nature and Consciousness, whose instruments of research are the human Will and the developed Powers of Inner Perception which are at least latent in every human being;

SACRED—

as indicating the exalted origin of the teachings whence only can the power and the knowledge be acquired, and to differentiate it from a lower form of occultism which is concerned merely with the domination of certain superphysical entities and the display of the lesser powers of the human consciousness.

PREFACE

FOR a more nearly complete presentation of Christian doctrine in the light of the Sacred Occultism the reader is invited to read, in addition to this volume, those of this Series entitled "The Return of the World-Teacher" and "The Occult Meaning of Prayer and Some Great Symbols"; and for a fuller realization of what is meant by the *spiritual life* in the teachings of the Christ or of any other Great Adept, the second volume of the Series, "The Spiritual Life: How to Attain It and Train Children for It."

The *raison d'être* of this little book is the regeneration of Christian theology and the clarifying of Christian conceptions by virtue of reason and the findings of occult research. It is not speaking too strongly to say that the Christian religion cannot be understood at all adequately without a fair knowledge of the hidden side of things,

the inner life, set forth in Theosophy; nor is it too much to say that an understanding so gained, enhances immeasurably one's conception of Christianity, augments exceedingly its grandeur and that of the Christ and of Jesus, His pupil.

It is manifestly the *duty* of Christian priests and clergymen to inform themselves upon these significant matters, else will they in their ignorance risk the doing of vast injury to their followers—injury that touches the very life of the soul itself. Those Christian teachers who are students of the Sacred Occultism are drawing about themselves exceptionally enlightened congregations and serving as Centers of Light in Christendom. May an ever-increasing number of these teachers arise from the shadows and justify Christianity fully to the hearts of the lowly and the intellects of the lofty!

F. M. W.

CONTENTS

PAGE

I. THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST. 1

More Christs than He of Palestine—The Incarnation of a Christ—The Birth, Significance and Death of Jesus—Jesus, the Disciple; Christ, the Master—The Birth of the Christ-Principle—The Way to Initiation, and the Goal.

II. THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ATONEMENT. . 47

The Sombreness of Orthodox Christianity—The False and the True Conception of the Crucifixion—The Crucifixion Plus Pain—The Gospels—The Crucifixion Minus Pain—The Ordinary Meaning of the Atonement—Some Uses of Pain—No Growth Without Self-effort—The True Atonement.

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST

THE TRUTH ABOUT CHRIST

IN this little exposition of a great and mysterious subject, we are to consider doctrines that strike at the very heart of religious intolerance and clear the way to a rational explanation of brotherhood and of human progress.

Behind all creeds, behind all dogmas, behind all sectarian barriers, of all religions, stand the mighty Figures of the Founders. Behind *all* religions stand these wondrous Figures, these Lords of Love, these Christs; but as we are in Christendom we are to have especially in mind the Figure of Him, the Jewish Master, whose glory is each week celebrated with music and song and sermon—of Him who gave and is still giving Himself to free us betimes from our pain-imbued, but self-made destinies, our karma, of Him who long ago sacrificed His hard-won, well-earned bliss of super-celestial life that He might remain

with us, His younger human brethren, and help us on to the heights where He himself is standing. And fitting were it, in contemplating this gracious Giver of Himself, that we seek to emulate Him, and that to you who honor us with your attention we give from Theosophy's abundance some of the deeper truths that go to set men free.

MORE CHRISTS THAN HE OF PALESTINE

More indeed of these Exalted Ones have there been in the outer world of publicity than He who walked the hills and plains of Judæa two thousand years ago. One does not have to be a student of Theosophy to know this—a mere scrutiny of the identities in religions and in the sublime natures of their Founders will indicate it; but sad to say, few are the devotees of Christianity that do know it. Yet how much unrest would the knowledge of this fact allay! —the unrest that so fills the noblest souls of the Christian churches; the unrest that springs from the feeling that untold millions of their brothers outside the pale of the Church are inevitably to lack the true salvation, because of insuperable difficul-

ties in the way of taking to them the Gospel which alone, they believe, can save; the unrest that to so considerable an extent turns the highest energies of the devotee toward the conversion of adherents of other faiths, in foreign lands, rather than to the more complete unlifting of the lowly and ignorant within their own environment.

The denizens of our slums and the inmates of our prisons and reformatories are burdens which are rightfully ours, and to them does it seem that we should devote those nobly-inspired, though to our way of looking at it, wrongly-directed energies which now are expended in striving to drag away from other faiths those who were born in them and are dutifully following their injunctions.

Were Christians in general to come to realize that other great Teachers than He whom they call the Christ have appeared in the world, very different would be their attitude toward the rest of humanity, and different indeed their conception of the Father of all—far truer, far grander. At present the belief in Christendom can but be that the Father is of necessity neglect-

ing vast multitudes of His children, and allowing them to live and die without attaining salvation, as the great desideratum is termed. For Christians, believing, as they do, that theirs is the only true religion, must also believe that upon them devolves the task of leading the world to salvation; and it is evident that they are reaching but comparatively few of those living outside of Christian countries. And, also look at the hundreds of millions of the times previous to the coming of the Christ, who, according to the Christian belief, must have lived and died "unsaved" and been denied the bliss of Heaven.

All this, you see, is making but a poor economist of the Father whom we must conceive to be all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful. He has brought into existence countless millions of souls in the past, before Christ, merely to live and die and enter some dreary limbo because no provision had been made for "saving" them; and even now He is actually failing in His designs, for vast numbers of His human family are dying "unsaved," because the facilities for saving them are as yet in-

adequate; and futhermore, this must continue until the Christian churches—His only ministers, His only helpers—have become influential enough in point of numbers and power to place missionaries in every nook and cranny of the Earth, so that every human being shall have a chance to be "saved" if he so wishes.

Let me ask you, Is this the economy, the management, of an all-wise, all-loving, all-powerful Ruler of the Universe? And besides all this, think of the penalties believed by the great majority of professed Christians to await those who refuse to accept the Christian faith, those "dying in sin," as the saying is. Is this justice, to think that because one does not merely *believe,* he shall be punished? Is God both unwise and unjust?

I mention these things merely to call your attention to them, that you may think out the implications for yourselves. Every intelligent Christian knows better than this intuitively; the trouble is that he has probably never thought of these matters critically, analytically; and it is part of our duty as transmitters of the Secret Doctrine,

the Divine Wisdom, to call to the attention of the devotees of the various religions such points as these, wherein by adherence to merely formal and uncritical ways of thinking they have to some extent lost sight of the true meaning of their faiths. To be sure, even such erroneous beliefs as I have mentioned, have tended to build up and maintain devotion in the souls of their adherents. Especially was this true in the dark ages, when great hosts of the individuals in incarnation in Europe were the semi-civilised Britons, Teutons, Gauls and others of their class returned to Earth-life to take up its lessons anew in the midst of a civilisation built upon that glorious one which they had been instrumental in overthrowing. But there is little reason for perpetuating these illogical beliefs in the world of today.

Now such criticism as this, please to understand, is utterly free from any hint of hostility. Any criticism which a student of the true Occultism makes of any form of religious belief is always a judgment not of the religion itself as taught by its sublime Founder, but of the theology pertaining to

it. The theology is the great mass of speculation based upon the original teachings, and is in many respects often a lamentable perversion of the truth, due to priestly enthusiasm or priestly corruption. And when we criticise the theology we do so only for the purpose of freeing the religion from this conventional crust of the centuries or millennia, in order that the pure Light within may shine forth in its fullness.

By our study of these matters, and this study is open to you too—we finally arrive at a point of view from which we can see all religions as but facets of the great jewel of Divine Wisdom, each facet emitting a light of different color from the rest when you look at it slantingly or superficially, but the heart of the jewel, when you look down at it squarely, shining with a brilliant, pure, uncolored radiance, the source of the colors of the facets. This jewel, as I have said, is the Divine Wisdom, and when we who are students of the Wisdom criticise a form of religious belief, it is merely that we may help to purify it, in order that all may see not only the peculiar

color of the religion most clearly, but may become able to look squarely upon it and see most richly the radiance within it and realize the equal significance of the other religions it illumines.

Now, as already intimated, this belief that He who is called the Christ is the only divine Teacher who has appeared in the world, is one of the things we feel obliged to controvert; for in it is the implication that the Ruler of the Universe is unwise and unjust. Also, arising from this belief, there is naturally, among a large percentage of Christians, a feeling of self-righteousness, self-satisfaction, self-importance, even sometimes superciliousness, that is prejudicial to the growth of brotherhood, which is plainly one of the chief characteristics of the coming stage of human development; and this too we feel it well to call attention to, for this attitude is a menace to spiritual development, of which tolerance is one of the most conspicuous factors.

We should realize, as do all *true Christians,* that every human being is a brother. He may be younger, he may be older, than

we, in evolutionary development; he may be of a lower race, a stage through which we passed long, long ago; he may be loathsome to look upon and maliciously antagonistic to ourselves—nevertheless he is our brother, and we owe him our help and our best wishes in whatsoever way we can express them. This being so—and we all inwardly know it to be so, and in various crises of life show that we know it—can we believe that religions, divine teachings, were meant to divide mankind one from another, to stifle the inner impulse toward unity of feeling, toward sympathy for those of other faiths, who may be in distress, toward fellowship in all that that word implies? Can we believe that a Buddhist, a Muhammadan, a Hindu, a Parsi, is to be looked upon as an alien, a heathen, as beneath us, as beyond the sphere of our desire to be of service to humanity, if we find that we cannot induce him to forsake his own religion and accept ours?

Is it not more reasonable to suppose that each religion was given to a certain people in order to further their growth, being specially adapted to that particular people

and the conditions under which they were living; and that the truest religious helper of humanity is he who, finding a religion corrupt and its practices degrading, studies that religion in order to get at its spirit, and teaches *that* to its devotees of the more ignorant sort, rather than foist upon them a religion suited to other conditions and unsuited to theirs? Is it not more reasonable to suppose these things than that only one true religion has ever been given to the world and that the only true religious teacher of humanity is he who teaches that religion?

And taking into consideration the fact that the basic principles of all the great religions are the same—all teaching the unity of God, His manifestation as a Trinity, the existence of hierarchies of great superphysical beings called variously Archangels, Angels, Devas, and otherwise; teaching also man's essential identity with God and consequently his immortality, reincarnation, karma (or that subdivision of the universal law of causation according to which man reaps as he sows) *et cetera*—taking into consideration this fact that all

the great religions are based upon and teach the same fundamental truths, is it not more reasonable to believe that, instead of only one great Lord of Compassion, the Christ, having appeared on Earth, there have been as many as there have been Founders of religions?

And furthermore, is it not reasonable to believe that instead of there having been only these incarnations of God, or of God's great ministers, that have appeared within ordinary historical times, there have come into the world such Great Teachers as these, time and again since humanity's advent here millions of years ago?

And to go a step further: considering that saying of the Christ's, "I shall be with you alway, even unto the end of the world," is it not reasonable to believe that even as He *is* with us still, a great Master of the Wisdom, hidden from the eyes of the world in general, so are the sublime Founders of the other great existing religions with us also, guiding and guarding and inspiring their devotees each according to his ability to receive the celestial influence of the Master? And can we conceive

that these several Great Ones, these Perfected Men, who are serving so fully as channels of the Grace of God, are at variance with one another, so that it is but natural that their respective devotees should also be at variance and belittle one another's faith, and endeavor to convert one another to their several beliefs?

Now is it not eminently reasonable to believe, as Theosophy teaches to be a fact, that these sublime Teachers of the past are members of a great Brotherhood of divine men, men who have once been as ourselves, men who have been, even as have we, the lowest of savages, and later, in their earliest incarnations in some civilisation, among the class we call criminals; but who have at last evolved their inner divinity to the point where they have definitely taken themselves in hand, given their allegiance to their Higher Selves, and in the course of several subsequent Earth-lives have learned the remaining lessons that Earth had to teach, then have graduated from the great school which this world is, and become teachers and helpers to those of Their fellows who have been toiling along the

ordinary course of evolution behind Them? Is this not eminently reasonable?

THE INCARNATION OF A CHRIST

Each of these Great Ones is a Christ of full stature—a perfected man, as I have stated, who when He comes into the outer world to inaugurate a new movement upward, a new quickening of human evolution, serves so fully as a channel of the Life and Love of God, the Ruler of our Solar System, that He is said to be an incarnation of God. The body that He is to use, is born as our bodies are born, and grows up from childhood, and its occupant early shows forth His inherent greatness in various ways such as, in the case of the Christian Master, the discussions with the doctors in the Temple. And some generations after His death there accumulate strange legends about His birth, such as the immaculate conception, the dangers that beset His childhood, His preservation from these dangers, His temptation in the wilderness *et cetera;* and these legends and incidents of His life are connected with the universal Solar Myth, and there is asso-

ciated with Him the sign of the Zodiac in which the Sun is at the vernal equinox of His age. His designation as a solar god shows Him to have been a Christ of full stature; and these legends, and this linking of His life to the solar myth are probably directly or indirectly the work of Initiates, or disciples of one or another of the Great Ones, and are to be the outer signs and symbols of the Master's position and authority in the times to come.

I have said that the body of a Christ of full stature, a Great Adept, Master of the Wisdom, or Lord of Compassion, as He is variously called in English, is born as our bodies are born; for, coming into this outermost world, that body is, of course, subject to physical laws. There is nothing miraculous about its birth. It is born, however, of parents who, though they may not be of exalted position or even exceptionally lofty natures, yet through heredity can transmit a suitable physical body; heredity having to do, of course, only with the physical body, and not by any means with the real individual. The body of a Great One such as the Christ, how-

ever, is in one respect not born as the bodies of ordinary people are; that is, in a family selected by those Ministers of the Supreme, the Lords of Karma, who have charge of that particular work: He, from the inner worlds, the hidden side of things, selects His own parentage. He grows up (speaking of Him as occupying the new body from the beginning) surrounded by love and tenderness; is well educated after the fashion of the time; longs for the deeper knowledge of the secret schools or the true temples; renounces the world and its vanities; studies profoundly the philosophies current about Him; searches also the hearts of men; joins some community of aspirants practicing such a discipline as will purify and ennoble them and studying some fragment of the Secret Doctrine they may possess; becomes presently on account of His inherent greatness, their teacher perhaps; purifies their cult where possible; leaves them and visits some greater school, some immemorial center of the higher life unknown to the world at large; becomes its Hierophant, perhaps, and leads a few rare souls to initiation into the august Brother-

hood to which He belongs and whence all great religions have their Founders; or travels widely on special missions bearing on the far future; or goes forth as a reformer of existing cults, a Teacher of teachers, or as a Teacher of humanity in general, "drawing men to Him by the singular love and tenderness and the rich wisdom that breathe from His Person," attracting to Him a few of the more advanced souls of the time and vicinity, to whom he teaches, in secret, truths that are not given to those without; finally dies as an ordinary man does or perhaps withdraws from the presence of men and is seen no more by the world at large, except in cases of emergency, though He is, of course, accessible to His disciples always, whether He be in the flesh or out of it.

I have spoken of a "Christ of full stature." By this I refer to such as the Christian Master, the Buddha, Shri Krishna, Zoroaster and Orpheus. But this designation, "Christ of full stature," you will note, indicates that there is a stage in human development where one may be a Christ and yet not a perfected one, and

furthermore that there is a point where one is just beginning to be a Christ, and a course of evolution leading up to that point. As a matter of fact, Theosophy teaches, as I have already indicated, that, behind each great soul who has become what the world calls Master are indeed vast ages of development. Beginning in the human kingdom among the lowest of savages, and by repeated incarnations growing constantly in intelligence and love up to a certain critical point, the evolving soul there begins to be a Christ, thence passes onward through a few more incarnations to the stage where full Christhood is attained, and *compulsory* rebirth has ceased, and the triumphant graduate of the great world-school has before Him a choice of paths—seven—along any one of which His upward progress may be continued.* The Lords of Compassion are Those who, rather than pass on, choose to remain here as Teachers and Helpers. Such a One, as I have said, was the Christian, or rather Jewish, Master, for He was a Hebrew of Hebrews in that incarnation.

* See Vol. I of this series: "Recurring Earth-Lives—How and Why."

Their bodies wear out, as ours do, though very much more slowly; hence rebirth is necessary for Them, if They wish to retain physical expressions of Themselves; but the mere physical birth and death of one of the Perfected Ones are matters of no particular importance. It is the birth of the Christ-*principle* in a human being—that which makes him or her a Christ—which is the wondrously important event, an event with which even Nature herself responsively thrills, for it is the forthcoming from the ranks of the helped of one more Helper whose exalted activity will be the rendering back to the world of great multiples of the help He has Himself received.

THE BIRTH, SIGNIFICANCE AND DEATH OF JESUS

Before proceeding to elucidate to a degree the mysteries of that wondrous occurrence, the birth of the Christ-principle, let me speak of the birth of the body used by the Master we call the Christ. As a matter of strict fact, ordinary history knows nothing whatsoever about it, though

it has many suspicions that the date fixed for it is too late by many a year; and as to the day of the year, there are said to have been one hundred and thirty-six different dates adopted by different Christian sects. The 25th of December was finally selected by Pope Julius I, in A. D. 337; and St. Chrysostom, writing in 390, says: "On this day (i.e., the 25th of December) also the birth of Christ was lately fixed at Rome, in order that while the heathen were busy with their ceremonies (the Brumalia, in honor of Bacchus) the Christians might perform their rites undisturbed."

This statement by Chrysostom, you will see, does away entirely with the grounds for a belief that the Christ was born on the 25th of December; but this should not, by one iota, influence the celebration of Christmas, with its outwelling of goodwill and its spiritual upliftment.

As to the year in which Jesus was born, occult investigation, that is, the reading of the "memory of Nature," the so-called Akashic Records, by means of highly-trained, accurate inner perception, has in-

dicated it to have been 105 B. C., during the consulate of Publius Rutilius Rufus and Gnæus Mallius Maximus; and there is even considerable evidence of the ordinary sort fixing the date at least 100 years B. C., regarding which you might consult Mr. G. R. S. Mead's scholarly work entitled "Did Jesus Live 100 Years B. C.?" As to the exact day of His birth no statement has been publicly made, so far as I know; but it is not really important, except to students of astrology, and has probably been withheld by modern occultists lest it disturb the sanctity of Christmas.

The parents of Jesus were well-born, though poor, and He was educated in a knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures. His devotion and intelligence led His parents to dedicate Him to the religious and ascetic life, and He was sent to be trained in an Essene community in the southern Judæan desert, a community of mystics studying what we now call Theosophy and living the contemplative life. At the age of nineteen He went on to the Essene monastery near Mt. Serbal, on the caravan-route between Persia and India, and

Egypt. He studied there in its magnificent library works on Occultism, many of which were Indian; thence proceeding into Egypt, He received His initiation as a disciple of the one sublime Lodge which has in charge the evolution of the human race, and from which every religion has come forth. He returned to Judæa and began His teaching at the age of twenty-nine. It continued but three years, two of these being occupied in instructing the leaders of the Essene community there in the mysteries of the "Kingdom of Heaven" (i.e., the facts of the inner worlds, which through initiation were open to His observation at will), and the final year being devoted to preaching to the general public.

The mysteries mentioned, let me add, were just the esoteric knowledge now being so lavishly given to the world at large by the trained investigators of the Theosophical Society, notably Mrs. Annie Besant, the President of the Society, and Mr. Charles W. Leadbeater, her great colleague and fellow-initiate in the august Brotherhood of the White Lodge. It is knowledge of the hidden side of things, and

is Theosophy, "divine" knowledge or rather wisdom, in that it is a far fuller expression of God's plan for the world than is knowledge of the ordinary sort.

The teaching by the Master continued, as I said, but three years after His return from Egypt, for in the thirty-second year of His body's existence, it was terminated by an assassination which is without parallel in its influence, for both good and evil, upon countless millions of human beings, for it led to that strange and awful misconception of the meaning of "the Crucifixion," which I shall elucidate in Part II, upon the Atonement. Its influence for good lay in the outwelling of sympathy for the agonised Figure down through the centuries; its influence for evil, which I believe far exceeded that for good, lay in the fear and hatred engendered toward the Father who was conceived to have been guilty of so maltreating His Son, and in the degradation, in the minds of mankind, of the spiritual majesty of the Ruler of all. I am wondering if we might not go to the length of asserting that this misconception of the grand idea of the

"cross of sacrifice" and the delineation of the blood-thirsty tribal god of the ancient Hebrews in the so-called "Old Testament," were the common subjective focal point whence rayed out through the Prussian savages the horrible doctrine of might which has so recently led to the destruction, in but four years, of ten millions of bodies, the maiming of millions of others, and the creation of immeasurable, immitigable anguish.

As to the manner of the Body's death, please recall that twice-mentioned passage in the Acts of the Apostles, which reads: "The God of our father raised up Jesus whom ye slew and hanged on a tree." And as to His having been crucified either before or after death, please know that crucifixion is but a symbol—it stands for something of far, far greater significance than the nailing of a human body upon a wooden cross. As a matter of fact, the whole gospel narrative is figurative, and is the story of any Christ-in-the-making; it is not the story of the perfected Christ; consequently we see that it has been greatly misunderstood in these latter cen-

turies of our era; but, nevertheless, its wonderful spiritual beauty testifies most eloquently to the Source of the inspiration which led to its compilation and its use as the sacredest scripture of Christendom.

Friends, the *soul* of the *disciple* Jesus was crucified; his body was not—it was deprived of life by a mob in the Temple at Jerusalem. And as to His having suffered pain, I believe that His sufferings must have been negligible; for, by a slight readjustment of the consciousness, even a disciple in the earlier stages of the Path of Initiation can rise above physical pain—such a disciple, I mean, as one who has acquired what are called the "siddhis" or powers. Even the early Christian martyrs, who, except in a few rare cases, were undeveloped in these matters, are in some instances known to have suffered no pain while undergoing even the most diabolical of tortures—regarding which read the works of Cyprian. In my own experience I have seen a woman run over by a locomotive, so that both of her feet were cut off, yet she did not suffer at the time, but actually smiled at the injury. You might

ask, "Why, being as great as He was, did he not escape from the mob?" That He could have done so, who can doubt? Very easily might His body have been saved, for it is possible for Initiates some distance along the Path to make the body invisible at will; this being done by the manipulation of etheric matter by trained thought-power in such a way that rays of light are not reflected from the body, but bent round it so that it apparently causes no obstruction to them and hence becomes invisible to those around. But there is a law of the higher occultism, binding on every Initiate, that he may not use an occult power merely for his own helping. The Master, though, of course, risen above all laws of these lower worlds, conformed to this one and permitted the destruction of the body He was using; and that His reasons were ample, who can doubt?

I said that He taught but three years ere His body was destroyed. There consequently was not time to have taught all that He came to teach and have it assimilated by the minds and hearts of His hearers; hence, that He might continue His

instruction, He appeared in the secret school or community of the disciples in His subtle, spiritual body for upwards of fifty years, we are informed. In this period, we can well believe, much thorough instruction was communicated to and assimilated by the disciples as to the constitution of the world and as to the wondrous Path which leads to Christhood. And, let me add, His church is reforming, on strictly scientific lines in the matter of spiritual forces, and the spiritual splendor of the early communities of disciples is about to shine forth again—the Mysteries of the past are being re-established, and the Master Jesus will doubtless appear therein as their Hierophant.

JESUS, THE DISCIPLE; CHRIST, THE MASTER

At this point it is well that I communicate to you one of the central mysteries of Christianity—one known to the Gnostics of the early days; namely, that Jesus and the Christ are two individuals—the former the beloved disciple, the latter the Master; the former the Christ-in-the-making, the latter the Christ of full stature, a mighty

and glorious Minister of the Ruler of this Solar System of ours, this one tiny speck in the vast aggregate of systems—the mighty Minister who has charge of the religions, the teachings, of the world, and who is in the course of but a few years to appear again among men to give an impetus to the development of the next sub-race of humanity, the sixth. In His last coming forth from retirement, He came not in His own body, but utilised the gladly proffered body of His young disciple, Jesus, having taken possession of it at what is termed "the Baptism," when Jesus voluntarily departed into the inner worlds in His spiritual body, His body of matter several degrees finer than physical matter. It is possible that the Master used the body but intermittently, at the moments when the most signally important matters were to be attended to, and that Jesus returned to it at other times, except when it was sleeping.

The Master came at that time, almost two thousand years ago, to strike the keynote of the Fifth Sub-race—or rather, to lay down the lines of its inner growth; as well as to aid in the development of the

Fourth Sub-race, the Keltic, whose original Teacher was Orpheus.* The proper name of the Christian Master is the Lord Maitreya. He has succeeded to the office of Bodhisattva, Teacher of Angels and Men, held last by Gautama Siddartha, who Himself was advanced to Buddhahood, the culmination of human development prior to permanent abandonment of incarnation, for the purpose of assuming more exalted duties in the inner worlds.

Are you wondering how the Master may have appeared to the eye? Judging from the effeminate portraits of Him and from many other things in connection with Christianity *as it is taught,* the general conception of Him is one of considerable colorlessness. In the matter of appearance it is inconceivable that the Great Teachers are delicate, long-faced, sancti-

* Orpheus was the last appearance, as Teacher of a sub-race, of Him who had come as Vyasa in ancient India, as Hermes in ancient Egypt, and as Zoroaster in ancient Persia, and who appeared, for the last time on Earth, as Gautama Siddartha, in which personality he attained final illumination and became the Buddha, the Enlightened One, the most highly developed of the "crop" of humanity to which we belong.

monious-looking men. I understand that the physical characteristics of Jesus during the time of His ministry in that body were about those of the conventional portraits, without the sentimentality, but with a wonderful suggestion of inner power sweetened divinely by sympathy and compassion. The appearance of the body He is using today, is, I believe, quite nearly the same as that of the body of old. I have seen an actual portrait of this present body, and it is before my mind's eye at this moment—it resembles that of a highly refined Arab. And as to the appearance of the Lord Maitreya, the Christ, or Anointed One of the Mysteries, it is slightly more forceful; it too is before my inner vision, but I find it impossible to describe it at all adequately, so will refrain from an attempt. The Lord Maitreya lives in a beautiful country in the northern part of India; Jesus, the disciple of the elder days, in the vicinity of His home of old, namely, in the mountains of Lebanon, and is now, as I have intimated, a Master, and is in charge of the Christian religion. The Lord Maitreya, being the Bodhisattva, or

Buddha-in-the-making, is a Master of Masters, and is in charge of *all* religions.

In the matter of mental attitude and demeanor we can well believe the Great Teachers to be, in the words of Mr. G. R. S. Mead, "uncompromising opposers of all outward show of piety, all display of useless religious ceremonies and hypocrisy." They are sometimes quite brusque, sometimes humorous, always radiant with health and strength. Listen to this little episode between the anxious disciple Ananda and his beloved Master, the Buddha. To the gentle and slightly-amused Master His best-loved disciple said: "How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regard to womankind?" "Do not see them, Ananda." "But if we should see them, what are we to do?" "Abstain from speech, Ananda." "But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?" *"Keep wide awake, Ananda."* One can see His smile as He said it. But please do not have in mind those awful caricatures of the most highly developed human being of our chain of worlds—those gross, overfed figures said to represent the Buddha, which you

can buy in Chinese or Japanese novelty shops or which you can see by the myriads in Japan and elsewhere. Instead of that, think of the most glorious-looking man you have ever seen—a man with wondrous blue eyes and long, jet-black hair and noble forehead—and conceive of him as filled with an indescribable spiritual radiance, and then you will have an impression of the true appearance of the Buddha, as well as that of each of the Masters of the Wisdom, with certain differences in the color of hair or eyes.

Let us think of these Great Ones as the culmination of development physically, so far as the beauty and serviceableness of their bodies are concerned, and as ineffably tender in Their relations with Their human brothers, yet strong with a strength that radiates graciously from Them; endowed with an intellect before which the greatest of ordinary mankind must bow in lowliest reverence, and with an insight that sees to the heart of a sorrow, of an inspiration, of despair, of exalted hope; and quick to respond in kind to each that can be helped by Them.

THE BIRTH OF THE CHRIST-PRINCIPLE

Now to plunge deeper into our subject, and to reveal in a few broad outlines the Divine Plan for those who have reached the point where they can find interest in these matters, let me tell first of the birth of the Christ-principle. This is the real birth of the "Christ." It is the point in evolution at which that principle in the complex human constitution which is next above the mental principle, is vivified to so great an extent that the man "realizes for the first time *in himself* the outpouring of the divine Love, and experiences the marvelous change which makes him feel himself to be one with all that lives." This wondrous experience takes place at what is called the First Great Initiation, which marks the entrance to the Path of Perfection, the ancient "strait gate and narrow way." It is called the "Second Birth," and the Initiate is said to be born into the "kingdom of heaven," as one of the "little ones," as "a little child"—which names are ever given to the new Initiates. And such is the meaning of the words of Jesus,

that a man must become a little child to enter into the Kingdom. This interpretation, you see, relieves that expression, "a little child," of some of the sentimental misconceptions that have aggregated about it, which have possibly done harm in that they have exalted the ignorance and innocence of childhood above the knowledge and experience of manhood and womanhood as passports to the Path of Spiritual Development; and as a result Christianity in general, since the times of the Church Fathers, can hardly be said to have required the attainment of *knowledge* as one of the qualifications of the perfect devotee. Furthermore, knowledge began to be considered—indeed scientific and philosophic knowledge is even yet considered by probably the great majority of Christians—as at least somewhat prejudicial to faith in the teachings of the Master. *The Church Fathers, however, insisted on knowledge, broad, profound knowledge,* as an indispensable requirement for him who would reach the heights of devotion and attainment. I refer you to the works of Origen and Clement. And many Christians seem

to forget that St. Peter said: "Add to your faith virtue and to virtue *knowledge.*"

Please remember this as an argument for the necessity for learning, in the Church, and further, this bit of history; namely, that the Dark Age of Europe (when for hundreds of years the human intellect was fairly stultified and even stifled by excommunication and torture-chamber and *auto-da-fe*) was the working out—under the teaching of the officials of the Church and the dreadful examples of cruelty and selfishness portrayed in the so-called Old Testament—*of the belief that knowledge is inimical to devotion.* And please remember, too, that when Jesus speaks of "little children" he refers generally to new Initiates in the Great White Lodge of Adepts, and to the early stages of the development of the Christ-principle.

THE WAY TO INITIATION, AND THE GOAL

The mystery of Initiation! What sublimities cluster about it! The beginning of the last stage to the Goal—the acceptance by Perfected Men as Their associate in Their mighty service of leading the hosts

of human souls to the heights of Divinity! Do you wish to know the steps necessary to be taken ere one can hope to receive the first of the Five Great Initiations? I will cover the matter broadly, for that is not our special subject, and the space available will not permit of fuller treatment; besides, I shall deal with this wonderful subject in a later volume of this Series, under the title of "Finding the Master."

First, please keep in mind that *no effort of any sort which we may make, be it intellectual, moral or spiritual, is ever wasted*: "as a man soweth, so shall he also reap," inevitably. This law, the Law of Karma, is inviolable. Consequently we can commence to build up now a *character* such as we should like to possess, and be absolutely sure that every effort we make in this direction is to have a permanent effect; that in our next Earth-life we shall begin with just the sort of character, just the kind of intellect, just the degree of spiritual insight that we have in this life succeeded in attaining; and that in that life we can build on that foundation and reach yet greater heights of attainment, and so

on, life after life. Is this not consoling, this feeling of security in the arms of inviolable law, this feeling that we *can* make ourselves just what we wish to be? To the wise it is only necessary that they be shown the way. They will cease to drift ignorantly and blunderingly with the slow stream of normal evolution; knowing the Goal, they will take themselves in hand definitely and firmly, and strive to their utmost to reach it. The Goal is Great Adeptship, Mastership, perfected Christhood, and it was just this that St. Paul (who was an Initiate) had reference to, when, in his Epistle to the Philippians, he used the words: "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead."

Ceasing to drift, and striving to reach the Goal, the aspirant will far outstrip his fellows and will become able to lend them an effective helping hand in the course of a life or two or even sooner. And, remember, it is only that he may align his own individual will with the Divine Will *voluntarily*, and devote his energies to the helping of his fellowmen and indeed of all grades of life, that the Path of Initiation

is opened to the aspirant. This should be borne in mind, that you be not deceived by contrary statements of members of any of the occult fraternities in the world. Self-seeking must be rooted out before the Path can be entered. And in order to be able to set foot upon that wondrous Path the aspirant must become an accepted pupil of a Great Adept, a Master of the Wisdom; and that he may merit this exalted honor he must light his soul so that it may be seen by the Great One who is to be his teacher.

I will say that the powers of a Great Adept are so marvelous as to be quite beyond conception until one has learned, step by step, by a study of the Sacred Occultism, the rationale of their development. But as a matter of fact, from wherever He may be in the world, a Great Adept can survey the souls, or higher selves, of men and women and note any that have become lighted up by nobility of character, unselfishness, intelligence, spirituality, the passion for service, and that are ready to undertake definitely the pursuit of the Sacred Occultism in order that finally the Christ may be born in them.

I might add that in the aura which surrounds each person, which aura is egg-shaped and composed of matter of the surrounding astral and mental worlds, his whole character is depictured—in the relative positions, hues and quantities of the colors displayed in it, and it is partly in this way that the Great Adept is able to judge of the fitness of the person for the higher spiritual development; partly, I say, for it is necessary that He also look back into the man's past lives in order to see what karmic debts he has still to pay, for it is possible that some such debts, the results of the man's past thoughts, desires and actions, might make the pursuit of occultism inadvisable at that particular time in that particular life.

Do you wonder how the aspirant is to light his soul, in order that it may be seen by his Master? He must weed out the elements of evil in his character; he must, in general terms, learn control of mind, meditation, building of character. He must acquire, to a certain degree, what we might call ordinary gentlehood; he must acquire discrimination between the real and the un-

real, devotion to right without self-interest, regulation of conduct so that he will do at once what deliberation would impel him to do; he must acquire tolerance in its widest sense, forbearance, enlightened faith, unswerving steadiness; and he must work into his life a very passion for the service of his fellows, and must have built up in himself a permanent aspiration for union with the highest ideals he can imagine of love, wisdom and beneficent power.*

Having acquired these qualifications to some degree of fullness, and his karma, or self-made destiny, permitting, he receives the mystic acknowledgment; the Great One who is to become his teacher reveals Himself in some way to him and thereafter directs his self-development—in moments of depression shines upon him with His love, in moments of thought inspires in him lofty ideas, at times of danger to his person, gives warning.

You will note that the preparation for this higher development is entirely mental and moral; it is the acquirement of knowledge and devotion; it is not by any means

* See Vol. II: "The Spiritual Life."

the development of psychic powers, which so many occultists of the lower or the more ignorant sort are seeking, much to their detriment. Psychic powers are in very truth most often a hindrance and must be so greatly subordinated—for the safety of their unhappy possessor—as to be practically killed out, before one can undertake the work of the earlier stages of the higher occultism, that which leads to the birth and development of the Christ-principle in the aspirant.

After a considerable period, a number of years perhaps, or perchance in the next Earth-life, the aspirant receives the Second Birth. This wondrous event takes place "for the most part outside the body, but in waking consciousness; i.e., the man is initiated generally in his astral body in full consciousness, the physical body being left behind in sleep." Initiation means "the expansion of consciousness which is brought about by the definite intermediation of the Master. . . . This expansion of consciousness gives what is called the key of knowledge; it opens up to the Initiate new vistas of knowledge and of

power; it places within his hand the means of unlocking the doors of Nature . . . *in order only that he may become more serviceable to the world at large.*" He now feels himself to be one with all that lives; in a burst of higher consciousness he sees himself objectively, in strange fashion, actually *to be one with all that lives*—the Brotherhood of Man and the Fatherhood of God become incontrovertible facts to him. This exaltation of consciousness is the indication and warrant, as it were, of the birth of the Christ-principle in him, the principle of bliss and unity, which is next above the mental principle in us; and this marvelous birth is what St. Paul refers to when he says to his followers: "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you."

The newly-formed Christ is called symbolically "the infant Christ," "the Holy Child," or, in the words of St. Peter, "the hidden man of the heart." Having become the "little child," called so, even though in physical life he may be at the time a man (or a woman) of forty or fifty, he has to live out in his own person the life of

the Christ, until he becomes the "perfect man," having grown "unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ"; that is, he traverses the Holy Path of Discipleship, with its trials, its sufferings, yet its joys, till, when the suffering is over, when the Path has been trod, he becomes "he that overcometh," of whom it is said by the ascended Christ: "I will make him a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out."

This conception is so important that I will restate it less figuratively. In the course of a few lives replete with trials and strenuousness, lives which, in his case, follow one another in quick succession and without the intervening heaven-life of the majority, he who has passed through the Second Birth receives the remaining four Great Initiations, each opening up more exalted powers of consciousness, and becomes the Perfect Man, the Master, the Great Adept. He has learned all that this world can teach Him; there is no need for His reincarnating again, except of His own free will in order to become a Savior, to help along those still behind Him. The attainment of this Goal is what is really

meant by the "resurrection." He has been resurrected from the "dead," as we are called, who feel ourselves so very much alive; He has become indeed a pillar in the Temple and need go no more out into the physical world; He has become an executive member of the Great Brotherhood of the White Lodge, who are the guardians of mankind, who have charge of the evolution of the human race, who are the vicegerents of God for this planet and through whom God's will is otherwise expressed for the uplifting of the inner and outer worlds.

Now, friends, should we wait and be carried along by the slow stream of normal evolution? Why not seize at once the opportunity offered us, by theosophical knowledge, of hastening our progress toward the Goal—toward liberation from necessary rebirth, toward "salvation" as Christians term it, toward Christhood? Why not endeavor to enter this marvelous Path which epitomizes—compresses within a few lives—the stages in the long, wearisome course of normal progression? Why not strive for the birth in us of the Christ-principle, which birth is the reality behind the reputed birth so widely celebrated on

the 25th day of December, the day of days in Christendom?

The beginning, that is, the Probationary Path leading to the Path proper, consists of purification—physical, mental, moral—and the doing of good reasonably, unostentatiously; the ending is beyond our imagining—for the Self of Man and the Self of our Solar Universe are in essence one and the same; the Spirit of Man is the Spirit of God, and in Man's Spirit are all the powers of God, and under God's fostering care shall these powers gradually, in the fullness of the ages, become manifest completely—as evidence for which prophecy we have but to contemplate the attainments of our Elder Brothers, the beloved Master Jesus and the Teacher of Angels and Men, the Hope of the World, the Lord Maitreya, the Christ, who is so soon, we believe, to come forth from his beautiful home to aid in healing the wounds of the greatest of wars and in solving the problems that lie ahead of the world that through glorious victory has merited the uttermost Grace of God.*

*See Vol. IV of this series: "The Return of the World-Teacher."

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

THE TRUTH ABOUT THE ATONEMENT

SO important, my readers, is this subject, "The Truth About the Atonement," that I shall present it with emphatic plainness, but I ask of you to understand fully that in doing so I shall not seek to impugn anyone's right to believe exactly what he chooses. All that I wish to do is to endeavor to correct what to my mind are erroneous and injurious beliefs—but impersonally, abstractly, without reference to individuals or religious sects.

THE SOMBERNESS OF ORTHODOX CHRISTIANITY

In Part II of the next volume of this Series, "The Return of the World-Teacher," I shall specifically treat of some matters, an outline of which may well serve as an introduction to what is to be said concerning the Atonement in the pres-

ent volume. In that volume I shall draw your attention to the somberness of the so-called orthodox or theological Christianity: its designation of its Founder as "the Man of Sorrows," the only son of a God who is imputed to be capable of being fiendishly wrathful; its belief in the special creation outright of human souls, and in a hell—a place of uttermost woe—into which are to be cast those who are created outside the pale of the Church and who can probably never by any chance enter within that pale; its belief in a God whose creative powers are at the beck and call of any whose unbridled passions lead them to violate a certain one of his "commandments"; its belief that Christ, the son of this God, was a divine sacrifice to appease His father's rage, and through belief in Whom only, can this world be saved—saved from the perennial divine wrath which has so carefully prepared such awful punishments for those of his creatures not fortunate enough to be saved even after that alleged dreadful expiation on the cross.

I shall seek, in that volume, the reason

for this illogicality, this gloom, this fearful array of doctrine which lit the fires of the Inquisition, carried murder and rapine over a considerable portion of the face of the Earth, led the bloodthirsty minions of the Christian church in great armies against the pure and innocent, notably the Vaudois of northern Italy; I shall seek the reason for all this, and ask whether it could have arisen from the teachings of Him Who made the condition of entrance into Heaven not what you believe, but what you do, of Him Who was so eminently reasonable, so full of charity and peace and encouragement—Who came forth into the outer world of publicity as the Lord of Love, to uplift all life. In order that your intuition may answer this question, I shall ask you to recall the gory slaughters authorized and inspired by the god Jehovah and recorded in the so-called Old Testament; and I shall seek to confirm your intuition by the opinion that it was this old library of odds and ends of history and poetry and philosophy and allegory which had fortified the murderers of the innocent throughout the whole bloody his-

tory of the Christian church. I shall tell how this old collection probably became associated with the teachings of the Christ; shall indicate that it has no real inner connection with Him whatsoever; and shall give reasons for severing these old, gross writings—gross indeed, though mingled with some of the most exquisite of poetry—severing them completely from the canonical scriptures of Christianity.

With these preliminary ideas in mind, let us consider the real significance of the Atonement.

Our subject is not an easy one. May I not ask you to follow me closely? I do not wish you, by any chance, to misunderstand; I wish you to realize the sincerity, the devoutness, with which this book is imbued. I am writing with little reserve, for I feel that you would not be reading this statement of extraordinary verities—except from curiosity—unless you were ready for the *truth*.

Let me in this case, too, appeal to your intuition. Let us free ourselves from preconceived notions. Let us forget for the moment the teachings of our past, if we

have been taught in the Christian church. Let us put aside prejudices. Let us permit the Pure Reason to shine upon the contents of our minds.

THE FALSE AND THE TRUE CONCEPTION OF THE CRUCIFIXION

First, kindly picture to yourselves an image of the tortured figure on the cross. In my mind's-eye I see a life-sized, almost nude figure of an agonised man nailed to the wall of an old church in the little town of Juarez in Mexico. Streams of blood are represented as dripping from the punctures in his hands and feet, and from the ghastly wound in the side of his chest bulging in frightful anguish; and these streams are shown to have dripped to the ground, for there, below each wound, is a gory pool on the floor. When I saw this, I said to myself: "Is this a spectacle worthy of Christianity—the religion of the Christ, the Prince of Peace?" And let me ask you: "Is it not a hideous, a degrading, a blasphemous spectacle — this ordinary image of the Crucifixion?—an incarnation, mind you, of the magnificent Lord of the

World (according to Christian devotees) nailed to a cross and in a posture of intense pain, the whole thing implying the mortal suffering of a son who had, in the words of somewhat recent Christian writers, 'drunk of the cup of wrath of His Father,' incurred the 'hatred and contempt' of His Father."

Let us squarely face the common-sense view of this matter, for there is no reason why we should hasten to hide our common-sense when we are dealing with religious matters, you know; and there is no more reason why we should take religious traditions at their face-value when they do not accord with our present knowledge than there is why we should now believe blood-letting a cure for all ills. Let us ask ourselves honestly: "*Is* this spectacle (and what it implies) worthy of the submissive adoration of so many millions of the great Aryan Race that retain it as one of their chief religious symbols?"

Let us now consider something that archæological research has to say on this subject. Even H. Marucchi, a well-known Roman Catholic archæologist, refers to the

5th-century gate of Santa Sabina at Rome and to an ivory of the same date in the British Museum as the oldest known examples of the crucifix, and says: "It is to be remarked that the Christ is here represented as still living, with the eyes open and without any mark of physical suffering." He goes on to say that in the 6th century the crucifix is more frequent, but still the figure is always living and clothed in a long tunic, and that it is only in the 12th century that they cease to represent the Christ as living and triumphant on the cross. *That is, for over a thousand years after the death of Jesus there was no such conception to be found in Christendom as that of a tortured figure on a cross.*

Please impress this deeply upon your minds. Marucchi seems to think that the new school of painting of Cimabue and Giotto was to a large extent responsible for the change. This brings to mind the simply dreadful and blasphemous representations of the Passion to be found in the pictorial art of the Middle Ages—so-called art, for it is anything but beautiful, and hence cannot truly be termed art, no

matter how famous the wielders of the brush and palette may be rated by the connoisseurs of this period. This wretched travesty of art, or rather degradation of artistic power, seems to have been inspired jointly by the slaughterhouse and the asylum for idiots, judging from the realism and quantity of the blood displayed and the sub-human visages of the Divine Victim, the Holy Family and the Saints. Dreadful and blasphemous indeed is such work, intended for public exhibition and constantly influencing more or less the imaginations of Christians and darkening their lives. And can we doubt that the real source of the changed conception of the Crucifixion, even though Cimabue and Giotto may have been among the first to express the new conception, was the Old Testament with its bloody record of murder of child by father, as expiatory victim or proof of devotion, on the altars of Jehovah?

Now let me call your attention to two records in the New Testament; one in the 5th chapter of Acts, the other in the 10th chapter. They both read: "*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew*

and hanged on a tree." Slew first, you will notice, and then hanged on a tree. What can those who believe the Bible to be true in every particular say to this? Does this indicate the crucifixion of a living body? Besides, it is exceedingly doubtful whether the nailing of malefactors to a cross was ever practiced in the Roman Empire at that time any more than it is practiced today in any civilized country, and that is, not at all.

Strange it is how superstition besots the minds of people, stultifies their reasoning-powers, and beclouds their hearts and their judgment! Strange too that each new forward step in the attainment of knowledge, especially into Nature's hidden side, is likely to be dubbed "superstition" and ridiculed by the wiseacres of the passing generation, only to be generally accepted by the new! Take, for example, the ancient and honorable science or art of Astrology; its exponents but a few short years ago called charlatans by almost everybody else, yet now being sought on all sides and well paid for their casting of horoscopes and their delineations of char-

acter, especially of young children as an aid to their proper training; and its general effect the impressing upon the minds of thoughtful people, of the unity of all things, the correspondence of man with his Universe, the omnipresence of law, and the truth that our destiny is self-made—that we are bound by our past, but can change our future, can "rule our stars," by the magical might of our own will.

Let us try ever to keep open our minds to the Truth—that which after due scrutiny appeals to us as the Truth—no matter what any book on Earth may say, or any teacher may teach, or any tradition may have brought down through the ages; let us keep our minds flexible, ready to learn in this direction or that, ready to accept what is sanctioned by our reason at the time, yet prepared to change on the coming of a greater light. Thus are the channels of thought kept pure and free for the outpouring of Truth from above and its distribution through the world below; and particularly is this advisable now, at the dawning of a new dispensation, the near coming of the greatest Light in the Seven Worlds, Who is to grace with His Holy

Presence the outer fields of activity of this most material planet of the Seven, and teach as never Teacher taught before.

Here let me assure you of two remarkable facts revealed by occult investigation of the past—revealed not by poring over musty documents, but by observation, by trained spiritual faculties, of what are termed the Akashic Records. These records are really the contents of the Divine Mind, the Divine Memory, and are impressed upon an exceedingly subtile world-stuff called the Akasha; and one who has by long training in occultism gained the inner perception to a sufficient degree, can contact them and become aware of anything that has ever occurred in the world; the past appears before his inner vision in vivid living-pictures, and he can actually establish himself at any period and any place in the world's history and see just what was going on, and even read the thoughts of people present there, no matter what their language may have been.

The first fact that I have reference to is that which is mentioned in Part I of this volume; namely, that Jesus, instead of

having been crucified, was struck down—done to death—in a riot in the court of the Temple at Jerusalem. *This, which is the truth, in itself, you see, quite changes the whole aspect of Christianity as dogma.* You will realize, I believe, its potent implications. It sweeps away at once the fictions and fabrications regarding the Crucified Son and the wrathful and unjust Divine Father, which, while used by the occult Powers that guide human destinies to serve certain good purposes, nevertheless have obviously so distorted the truths of Christianity and degraded the religion, that it has come to be the mere fragment we find it today.

The other fact referred to, is the following, which I quote in the words of Mr. Charles W. Leadbeater, who is probably the greatest investigator of the inner side of things at present living out among his fellow-men, and published in his illuminative work "The Christian Creed":

> In tracing the symbolism of the Latin cross, or rather of the crucifix, back into the night of time, the investigators had expected to find the figure disappear, leaving behind what they supposed to be the earlier cross-emblem. As a matter

of fact exactly the reverse took place, and they were startled to find that eventually the cross drops away, leaving only the figure with uplifted arms. No longer is there any thought of pain or sorrow connected with that figure, though still it tells of sacrifice; rather is it now the symbol of the purest joy the world can hold—the joy of freely giving—for it typifies the Divine Man standing in space with arms upraised in blessing, casting abroad His gifts to all humanity, pouring forth freely of Himself in all directions.

Now let me ask you: "Which image would naturally inspire one with greater moral or spiritual strength, the image of a poor, helpless human figure nailed to a cross, obviously suffering torture of the keenest sort, and having been forsaken by a wrathful Father, having endured His hatred and contempt; or the image of a glorious man with arms outstretched at His sides in blessing, on His face sublime peace, divine beneficence, His whole attitude that of glad sacrifice—the Son of a Father who is 'too tender to awaken terror, too good to require supplication'? Which of these images would inspire you with the greater strength and peace and trust and hope for the future?"

There can be but one answer to this question. In fact, does not one who looks with reverence upon the ordinary crucifix instinctively feel a sort of antagonism to the Father who could so shamefully treat His Son, and does not the world appear to him gloomy and harsh and inhospitable? And what a pity that the sweet ministrations of certain of the nuns of the Roman Catholic expression of Christianity, to the sick and the otherwise unfortunate, and in the training of children, should be vitiated by the suggestion of gloom and the grave in their garb! What a pity, too, that the Puritans persist in their desire to squeeze life dry of its pleasures and joys, its lights and colors, its hopes, and its very foundations of faith in a Father of Love, and leave in their stead discouragement and fear and false views of the purpose of life! What a pity that these things should be; yet what else might be expected from "religious" teachings so repugnant to the natural instincts of the normal human heart, which feels that joy is its birthright and that pain and sorrow are unnatural limitations? And can one wonder that

thousands of ignorant Christians, as helpers in the inner worlds find, pass into the astral world at death in mortal terror, expecting—for they know they have not led as good lives as they should have led—to encounter the wrath of the "Father of Jesus" and be tossed into a hell of unspeakable woe!

Recall in this connection, too, that dreadful blasphemy which some ignorant monk —one of the thousands who copied and recopied the manuscripts of the New Testament during the centuries preceding the art of printing—introduced into Paul's Epistle to the Hebrews, reading "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." And listen to this specimen from a comparatively recent Christian writer—a bishop (Jeune)—"After man had done his worst, worse remained for Christ to bear. He had fallen into his Father's hands." Do we not see in each of these instances an echo of the Old Testament and the baneful influence of the ordinary story of the Cross?

In speaking of the fear of death among ignorant Christians, a fear so great that

even when they are once well "dead" they still fear that their usually not unpleasant surroundings on the other side just after death, with no necessity for eating or sleeping or working for a living, are due to some trick of the "Devil" in order to make their ultimate tortures the severer by contrast—in speaking of this, please understand, I do not refer to the true Christians, who know the *life,* but only to those who know but the dogmas, yet feel themselves followers of Christ.

Having indicated now that the ordinary conception of the Crucifixion has no foundation in fact, was even unknown to the Church itself up to the 12th century, and was probably due, with the nails, the crown of thorns, the blood, the wounds, and all the other ghastly accompaniments, to the diseased imagination of ignorant monks deep-dyed in the gory records of the Old Testament, and to the easily stirred fancies of the painters of the period; and having called your attention to the fact that there was a crucifix of a benign sort in use previous to the present one, and that prior to that there was but the figure

of a man—without the cross—with his arms outstretched in blessing, it remains for me to explain, in the light of the Sacred Occultism, what all this means.

First, let us know that even in connection with Christianity, the adherents of which believe the Crucifixion actually took place, this event and those which follow it are obviously—according to their own theological system—*not indicated to be definite historical events at all;* for the date of their commemoration is not a fixed one, as would be the anniversary of any actual occurrence, but is movable and dependent on astronomical calculations. Easter, you know, is celebrated on the first Sunday after the first full moon after the 21st of March, the time of the vernal equinox, Easter-day thus occurring anywhere between March 22d and April 25th. This connection of the Christ with the Solar Myth, in itself gives us an intimation of the truth of the matter, namely, *that the Crucifixion story is wholly an allegory.* Now what does it signify?

THE CRUCIFIXION PLUS PAIN

Let us take first the conception into which suffering enters. Even in this conception the ordinary devotee believes the agonised figure to be that of the Second Person of the Holy Trinity, one of the Godhead! and also, you know, it is almost *universally* believed that the Gospels narrate the story of the life of the latest Christ of full stature to appear and teach in the world.

In respect to the latter belief—for it concerns our subject intimately—let me hasten to assure you that the Gospels are greater than that, for they attempt to narrate the story of the life-on-the-Path of every Christ who arises as the flower or one of the fruits of humanity—they symbolize the inner life-history, on the Path of Initiation, of Vyasa, of Hermes, of Zoroaster, of Orpheus, and of the transcendent Buddha, Him Whose mantle fell upon the shoulders of His great Brother the Christ when the former attained Buddhahood and departed from Earth forever; just as they symbolize the life of the Christ and

of His pupil Jesus on the Path we too shall some day tread.

The story of the Christ has a far deeper and more significant meaning than that which lies on the surface of the Scriptures. In support of this, hear what St. Paul says; namely, "My little children, of whom I travail in birth again *until Christ be formed in you.*" Obviously by this he cannot be referring to a historical personage; he has reference to something more momentous than that, namely, the Christ-principle.

In every human being is a spiritual principle which in the course of evolution is to unfold to full stature, and this is termed the Christ-principle; in Theosophy we call it the Buddhic principle, or the principle of Unity, that plane of our being where we actually see that One Life animates all things. In the Great One who walked the lands of Judæa and Samaria this principle had indeed evolved to the full, and He was called "the Christ," the Anointed One, in the Mysteries; though to the common people of His time He was known merely as Yehoshua or Yeshua, "help of Jehovah,

or savior," for they knew not of the substitution which took place of the Master, the Christ, or Lord Maitreya, for the Pupil, Jesus, at what is called the Baptism, when the Spirit of God is said to have descended upon Him like a dove.

THE GOSPELS

The Gospels, it is obvious to the student, are indeed not the story of the Master's life; they are an allegory, as before mentioned, of the life-story of any Christ-in-the-making. In this gospel-story are three threads, that of tradition, that of legend, and that of mysticism. These have been intertwined into a single strand, and much confusion has resulted, but on separating them, as does Mrs. Besant in her wonderful book "Esoteric Christianity" and Mr. Leadbeater in part in his equally remarkable book "The Christian Creed," we find that the story becomes far grander than the surface readings would imply.

Let us consider the Gospels a little further, for the better elucidation of our theme. As to when they were written, ordinary history of the unprejudiced sort

does not pretend to know. The best opinion seems to be that it was between A. D. 117 and 138, or say 200 years after the actual death of the body of Jesus, which occurred in 73 B. C. (for He was born in 105 B. C.); and it has been well said that the writers, or compilers, would have been struck with amazement had they been able to foresee that posterity was going to consider their efforts divine and regard them as immediately inspired by the Source of all Wisdom.

Ordinary history does not know anything about the authors of the Gospels. Here let me quote from pages 90 and 91 of Vol. I of "The Inner Life," by C. W. Leadbeater:

> Certainly the Christian Bible ought not to be taken literally, for many of its statements are symbolical, and others are simply not true. When we examine clairvoyantly the life of the founder of Christianity, for example, we can find no trace of the alleged twelve apostles; it would seem that as men they never existed, but that they were introduced into the story for some reason—possibly to typify the twelve signs of the zodiac. The disciple Jesus, whose body was taken by the Christ, was not an illegitimate son, as is implied in the gospel,

nor was his father a carpenter. He was in reality of the highest aristocracy of the Jews, a descendant of their own old royal line. He may, however, have had a tinge of Aryan blood in him, which would be quite enough to cause the exclusive Jews to say that he was not legitimately of the seed of David; and that statement might very easily be taken to mean such an irregular birth as is suggested by the narrative.

The truth is that the four gospels at any rate were never intended to be taken as in any sense historical. They are all founded upon a much shorter document written in Hebrew by a monk named Matthæus, who lived in a monastery in a desert to the south of Palestine. He seems to have conceived the idea of casting some of the great facts of initiation into a narrative form and mingling with it some points out of the life of the real Jesus who was born 105 B. C., and some from the life of another, quite obscure fanatical preacher, who had been condemned to death and executed in Jerusalem about A. D. 30.

He sent this document to a great friend of his who was the chief abbot of a huge monastery at Alexandria, and suggested to him that he, or some of his assistants, might perhaps recast it, and issue it in the Greek language. The Alexandrian abbot seems to have employed a number of his young monks upon this work, allowing each of them to try the task for himself, and to treat it in his own way. A number of documents of very varying merit were thus produced, each incorporating in his

story more or less of the original manuscript of Matthæus, but each also adding to it such legends as he happened to know, or as his taste and fancy dictated. Four of these still survive to us, and to them are attached the names of the monks who wrote them, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John. The splendid passage with which the gospel of St. John opens, was not original, but quoted, for we found it in existence many years before the time of the Christ in a manuscript which was even then of hoary antiquity.

Those of us who have learned something of the possibilities of help of a lofty nature being given from the inner worlds, can well conceive that the young monks were aided by mental impression in their labors; but as to every word of the Gospels having been inspired, as is the belief in strictly orthodox circles, that is simply out of the question, as is indicated by the following facts.

Prior to 1514, the Greek text of the New Testament was transmitted solely by the uncertain means of manuscripts. It has been stated by the able and learned scholar, Mr. G. R. S. Mead (whose works I most heartily recommend to you), that no fewer than 3829 manuscripts had been definitely

catalogued, in 1902, and that probably 2000 more were still uncatalogued, also that in the New Testament manuscripts no fewer than 150,000 various readings have been counted. He further states that we have at best to do only with copies, the Greek manuscripts, none of which go back earlier than the 5th century; furthermore that the Greek text is not divided into chapters and verses (that division having been invented in the 13th century) and that the words are all run together, without punctuation.

Little hope for the verbal-inspirationists under these conditions, surely! and another opportunity this for the use of common-sense in dealing with sacred things the same as in dealing with worldly matters.

However, despite this unpromising state of affairs and the additional fact that in many of the copies made of the Gospel texts the monks who transcribed them added a word here or a sentence there "for the greater glory of the Church," the Gospels and the rest of the New Testament, aside from certain inconsistencies and other flaws of a minor sort, stand as a beautiful and inspiring statement of eternal verities.

Now in regard to this life-story of the Christ-in-the-making, with its allegory of the Crucifixion involving pain, it represents the sufferings of everyone who has turned definitely toward the higher life and has entered upon the struggle with his lower self which inevitably ensues; it represents pre-eminently the sufferings of every Initiate on the way to Christhood. For all must suffer the pangs which accompany the purifying of the lower self, all may be said to take up the "cross of matter"—a very ancient figure of speech. This is not a sacrosanct idea, far removed from ourselves; for when we are tortured by the darts of conscience or the pangs of living, it is indeed that *we* are crucified, that *we* are on the cross of matter. And so on up through the several stages of growth on the Path of Perfection; each stage with its cross, each with its defects to be overcome and its qualities to be developed—generally with pain. Indeed, when we have reached the Path of Initiation—that is, the stage of evolution in which the human Spirit is rapidly rising out of the entanglements of matter of the denser sort—as we all shall in some life, an opportunity is

given us to quickly pay off debts we have incurred through ill-deeds or bad qualities or ignorance in past lives, and we do this by suffering, in a way, *vicariously* for others; not that we actually take upon ourselves suffering that is due to others, but that we transmute, at the expense of suffering at times intense agony, accumulated evil forces which, allowed to run their course, would provide evil conditions for others and incitations perhaps to vice or crime, which they would be unable to resist. And furthermore, there is a particular suffering which some have to face, "where," says one who has experienced it, "darkness is on the human consciousness, and never a glimmer of light comes through; he must know the pang of despair felt by the human soul when there is darkness on every side, and the groping consciousness can find no hand to clasp." Then it is that the agonized soul cries out: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" This is the time of suffering, this series of lives we live while on the Path of Initiation, or Perfection, and for several lives preceding; and this series of lives on the Path it is, that is

epitomized and described in allegory so beautifully in the Gospels, with Jesus as the Initiate on the way to human perfection. And of similar significance is the Book of Job.

THE CRUCIFIXION MINUS PAIN

Now as to the conception of the Crucifixion that does not involve pain, this pertains, as I have intimated, to the Christ of full stature. Such a Great One, by virtue of His development, is a man of sublime peace and control and tender compassion and gladness. Let me repeat what Mrs. Besant, from occult investigation, says of the Master of the West:

> The rare charm of His royal love, outpouring from Him as rays from a sun, drew round Him the suffering, the weary and the oppressed, and the subtly tender magic of His gentle wisdom purified, ennobled and sweetened the lives that came into contact with His own. By parable and luminous imagery He taught the uninstructed crowds that pressed around Him, and using the powers of the free Spirit He healed many a disease by word or touch, reinforcing the magnetic energies belonging to His pure body with the compelling force of His inner life.

The Christ could not have been a "Man of Sorrows"; that is unthinkable to one who realizes His sublimity. The very fact that He is a Christ, is evidence that He has risen above all pain. A Christ is a human soul that has passed clear through the life of humanity, from lowest savagery, through criminality, to human perfection, to union with God. Having been reborn into physical life time after time, for hundreds of times, till He has learned all the lessons the world can teach Him, He need not be born again—"He need go no more out"—except of His own will; and the very fact that He entered into incarnation in the midst of the world, even for the three short years in the body of His beloved disciple Jesus, is evidence that He is one of the Saviors of the world. For certain of these exalted Elder Brothers of humanity, rather than pass on into an existence whose grandeur and bliss are beyond all human conception, remain here with their younger brethren whom they have preceded in the progress toward the Goal—remain that They may help them on upward to the heights which They have Themselves at-

tained. Recall, too, what our Great Teacher is reputed to have said: "I shall be with you alway, even unto the end of the world." This expresses a profound truth when properly translated "even unto the end of the *age,*" for He surely will be with us—He the Teacher of Angels and Men, the Supreme Teacher of our world—until the end of a well-defined era to be determined by our progress; whereupon He, Himself, will have attained a higher stage of interior development, will pass on His mantle to another Great Teacher even now preparing for the work that lies so far ahead, and withdraw from the affairs of Earth, as did His predecessor in the body of Gautama Siddartha, these duties done. This is what it means to be a Lord of Compassion, a Savior of the World!

Now let me ask you, "Could such as He, this Perfected One, be in despair, weep, be scourged by physical pain, be nailed on a cross and cry out to God in agony? Though His physical body was destroyed by a mob, could He feel pain, He who could leave that body at will? Why should He feel pain?—what use could it serve?" Had He so

wished, He could have saved His body; there is no doubt about this, for even a disciple, on the Path of Initiation, above a certain grade, can make himself invisible at will by a certain manipulation of etheric matter or the use of mesmeric power. But He did not save His body, for the reason, in all probability, that He saw there was to be no longer any use for it as the most economical means of helping the world. According to my view, it need no more have given Him pain to part with it at the hands of violence, than it pains us to discard a garment. I dwell upon this matter of pain, for I want you to understand that *pain and sorrow and gloom should not be associated with Christianity, but rather should enlightened faith, hope, confidence, charity and supreme peace be its companions.*

"But," you may say, "what about the Sacrifice, what about the Atonement?" Let me ask you: "What sort of sacrifice is that of one poor physical body?" Why, soldiers and firemen and others in hazardous employments are sacrificing thus somewhere in the world every day, and we think nothing of it! And think of the millions

who have been sacrificing thus in Europe so recently. And surely it is a greater sacrifice for a soldier and those others, most of whose happiness is centered in their physical bodies, to give those bodies up in pain and oftentimes horribly mangled, than it would be for a Christ to give up His body, which He is but using as a dull instrument through which to express a Life beyond our imagining! As to the real Atonement, we shall consider that presently.

So much for the mere symbols—that of the agonized figure on the cross, and those of the benign figure on the cross and without the cross, or the Latin cross without the figure. Now let us go a little deeper and examine more fully the ideas grouped about these symbols.

THE ORDINARY MEANING OF THE ATONEMENT

The ordinary meaning of the Vicarious Atonement, in plain language, is that God having become enraged at mankind, whom He had created just as they were, and who

really had no voice in the matter, vented His spleen upon "His only son" by abandoning him to the tender mercies of the said incorrigible mankind; and mankind by foully murdering this divine Victim, was to be saved—through His sacrifice—from future punishment. Some theologians say, not all of mankind are to be saved, but only those who profess allegiance to the Church; that is, none will be saved (whatever that term really means to those who use it) unless they are so fortunate as to come into contact with the Church in some way and express allegiance to that institution and a belief in the expiatory power of Christ.

Now, friends, is it not high time that rational Christians rule out of court such maunderings as these, and demand of their spokesmen and teachers even commonsense, let alone the depth of thought and heart and the lofty inspiration they are entitled to expect from them? If these absurdities continue to be tolerated, what is to become of Christianity in the face of the growing enlightenment of the generations ahead of us? I merely ask the questions, that you may ponder them at your leisure.

There is plenty of evidence in the Gospels themselves, I would remind you, to show that no such ideas were ever contemplated by the early exponents of this religion. For one, take the sentence (Matth. vii. 2): "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again." And St. Paul too says, you know, "God is not mocked—whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Does this indicate a belief, in either the mind of Paul or that of the writer of the Gospel, that we can attain salvation by proxy, through a vicarious expiation of our sins?

Humanity certainly suffers—that cannot be gainsaid—and suffers terribly in the aggregate—from its sins. But let us remember that in sin free-will plays a part, for that which is not known to be wrong, is not sin—it is but error. I do not believe God intended that we should suffer; the heart of our being, as of His, is bliss, inconceivably great; and besides He has ever provided us with Teachers, that we might learn if we would, and avoid wrongdoing, or acting in opposition to evolutionary law, and hence not suffer. But it seems that the presence in us of His mighty Spirit has impelled us

to take the initiative, to strike out for ourselves, without reference to our Teachers and Their precepts, and the result has been violated law and its reaction upon ourselves, in the form of distress.

I cannot think of God as *compelling* us; I feel that He is too tenderly solicitous not to make automatons of us, to do this. It is more likely that He provides us with opportunities and Teachers, and thus calls forth, through the ages, our inherent divine powers. And as to error and sin and pain, they are due to ignorance; even where we know a thing to be wrong, yet do it, there is a deeper knowledge which is not yet ours, else we could not have done that thing. Humanity suffers from its ignorance, yet it is learning from its sufferings.

Even though pain were, as we may imagine, not contemplated in the beginning as an important element in the scheme of things, yet once superinduced upon that scheme by humanity's wilfulness, we can realize that the Divine Love must have forthwith proceeded to utilise it for the benefit of humanity; just as the errors of individuals, in a headstrong, selfish and

egotistic endeavor to impress themselves deeply upon the tablets of history—for example, Napoleon and his sanguinary career, and William Hohenzollern in his unspeakable machinations—are availed of by the Occult Government of the world for the good of mankind.

SOME USES OF PAIN

It may interest you to consider briefly some uses of pain. I will mention a few of them having reference to character and growth of soul:

(1) Pain rouses the Self to knowledge of the lower worlds in which it has incarnated, by evoking its aspect of Activity and compelling the development of the power of attention and definiteness and precision of perception.

(2) Pain organizes man's vehicles, his physical and superphysical bodies, and the vehicles of his younger brothers, the lower lives, who also have had to suffer through immemorial ages as the result of man's disturbance of the natural scheme of things—organizes these bodies by causing exertion of a controlled or directive nature.

(3) Pain purifies the lower nature and prepares it for handling by the Self; for, pain being contrary to our nature, we seek to be rid of that which causes it—namely, ignorance and error and sin; and this mental attitude opens us up to the impulsions of the Higher Self.

(4) Pain quickly teaches wisdom, intellectual and moral. Our best lessons come from pain. Pain is evidence of a defect in us, and we are stirred to cure that defect. If, for instance, we seem to lose a loved one through what we miscall death, and suffer anguish therefrom, even in that case it is due to defective knowledge, incomplete realization of the true state of affairs; greater knowledge would assure us that the loved one is far better circumstanced than he was here, and that he may be with us consciously after we have left our bodies in sleep, and is only apparently separated from us when we return to these prison-houses at the coming of dawn. Suffering from lack of knowledge in this matter, we are impelled to seek information about it.

(5) Pain gives power through calling forth the Will. It causes us to go down

deeper into ourselves, to root our outer selves, these personalities, more deeply in our Divine Selves, our Individualities. It has been well said: "Every pain suffered in one body becomes a power wielded in the next."

So, let us see God's Love in His utilization of our self-induced pain, for our good and that of the world; and let us realize that *if the true, inner reaction of our wrong-doing could come upon another rather than upon ourselves, it would mean the contravention of a fundamental law of the Universe, the Law of Causation, and that hence the so-called Vicarious Atonement, in its ordinary interpretation, is absolutely an impossibility.*

NO GROWTH WITHOUT SELF-EFFORT

We cannot grow in strength, physical, mental, moral or spiritual, we very well know, if someone else does the work for us. Life after life we come into this outer world, grow from infancy to old age, perhaps, undergo all sorts of experiences, store away in our minds the lessons we have learned; then at death pass into the

first of the inner worlds, reflect upon our experiences, suffer at first from some of them, perhaps, and undergo other and varied vicissitudes there; then pass into the heaven-world, which is a sort of guarded region where we are protected from anything that might cause us inquietude, and where there is left active in us little of our past life but the elements of intellectual and character development and of bliss, which we work up into faculties and powers during our centuries of joyful existence there; and then, after this long and delightful rest, we come forth again into incarnation to gather further experience, through suffering for wrongs committed here in the past, through the seizing of opportunities for growth and progress which are offered us in the way of education of mind and heart, and through innumerable other ways which a physical life affords. The world—in its physical, astral and mental divisions—is truly a great school, and our lives here in the physical division are for the purpose of learning in this particular department of the school the lessons it has to teach; and

again and again must we return, till we have fitted ourselves to graduate. A Christ is one that has graduated, but remains as a Teacher. These Teachers at intervals come among us and give us definite instruction intended to help us on the way to graduation. Such a Teacher was Krishna; such was the Buddha; such was Jesus, who became later Apollonius of Tyana and then the Hindu Teacher Ramanujacharya, and who is now living in the general vicinity of the Holy Land again.

As we have already stated, men's sins and crimes are defects due merely to ignorance, and I think you must now realize that as a matter of fact *we have nothing to be "saved" from but our lack of knowledge.* Can another take upon himself the reactions from our ignorance? All, I think, intuitively know of this Law of Causation which is universal—a law whose non-existence is unthinkable. This particular phase of it, which concerns thoughts, feelings and actions, Theosophy, along with Buddhism and Hinduism, calls the Law of Karma.* The very constitution of our

* See Vol. I: "Recurring Earth-Lives—How and Why."

minds impels us to believe it to be inviolable. We have an inner, essential reason for believing that every thought we think, every emotion or passion we give way to, every act we perform, reacts upon ourselves in some way sometime.

We have in the past made ourselves what we are now. We are now making the conditions of our future lives, in the midst of which conditions, if they be severe, our sovereign Will must lie prone, bound down by the Lilliputian fetters of innumerable wrong acts or thoughts or desires perhaps of apparently trifling sorts, but out of which by a supreme and regal effort sometime it will rise. The Past we cannot recall. The Present is ours. The Future will be what we make it. If, then, we are of a devotional temperament now, let us turn that to the highest. If we are thinkers, let us think to the avail of our fellow-creatures, to the highest end we can conceive of. If we are people of action, let us be just as active as we can, and turn our activity more and more completely to the betterment of the world, consciously, even as the selfish men of affairs are doing, unwit-

tingly, in seeking fortunes through business enterprises.

We develop along different lines, depending upon our temperaments, but are all going toward the top of the mountain, and shall meet there sometime. So, because a man does not turn his attention to professional, churchly religion, he is no more to be considered in a precarious condition than a student would be if he did not turn his attention to mathematics because he did not like it. The atheistical thinker and the keen, intelligent business-man who is not religious, may both of them be in a more enviable condition so far as soul-growth is concerned, than the religious devotee who happens to be illogical and unpractical. In the course of their series of lives the thinker and the active man will inevitably come into contact with teachings and experiences which will lead them to a reverence for higher things which might be termed religious, thence to an awakening of Spirit in which the Truth will be seen; and the religious devotee who is lacking in mentality and practicality, will have to return here again and again for the develop-

ment of his reason, discrimination and spirituality. We should get firmly fixed in our minds the fact that our destiny is entirely in our own keeping, even though others and our environment seem so powerfully to affect us—and in the light of this, I say again that the conception that one can suffer for the sins of another and thus wipe them away, is not only unreasonable, but is absolutely impossible.

On the other hand we must remember, in the spirit of tolerance, that hundreds of thousands of Christians have found in the thought of the Sacrifice of the Divine Victim an inspiration to the noblest of lives and to the highest reaches of self-sacrifice. It is obvious why: the Christ is their ideal, their exemplar. Had they, though, never heard of a suffering figure on the cross, or of the priestly fabrication of a wrathful God, and known but the benign Figure and a loving and tender God, what a difference might there not have been—what bloodshed averted, what awful crimes precluded, on the part of those who emulated the cruel father who could so treat his son!

THE TRUE ATONEMENT

The cross with the benign figure, and the cross alone, refer to the Christ of full stature, that manifestation of Himself through Whom God pours Himself so freely; and they refer also to the Second Person of the Holy Trinity. The real meaning of the Latin cross and the cross-like benign figure, is not at all expiation; it is love, return to Unity, At-one-ment—the original meaning of atonement. *And in respect to the Christ, the true Atonement lies in the fact of the identity of nature of the Christ and His fellowmen and His having reached, in the course of a greater number of Earth-lives than we have had, what is called the Plane of Unity, of At-one-ment, whence He may share with us, His younger brothers, all that He has gained—whence He may pour forth His life into ours—whence He may help to lead us, along whatever path of religion our feet may be treading, be it Christian, Hindu, Buddhist, Parsi, Muhammadan, Jain or Jewish, to where He so patiently stands.*

We are all incarnations of God. The

Christ was and is so only in greater measure, for He is one of the first-fruits of the terrestrial race of humanity, risen far above us who still sleep in these lower worlds, and consequently become a mightier channel for the Divine Life of His Father, the Ruler of our Solar System, Who is our Father as well. And that is the line of our own progress—to become ever greater channels of the Divine Life, in our several ways, which ways, as I have said, eventually converge into one. And that One Way is in the plane of being where the Christ stands, in His own inner self, for we must remember that He shares our manhood even in a physical body, now as always; and standing at this center, He can look outward mystically, clairvoyantly, into our innumerable ways approaching His hallowed abode, and see wherein we err—wherein we most need assistance—how best He can help us. And as for our being punished for error, far be it from Him to think of punishment for us from our common Father; He, our Master, our Elder Brother, feels for us but love and compassion, and He ever seeks to serve His younger brothers.

There is, as I have mentioned, a Plane of Unity. It is absolutely real—more real than this Earth, by far. It is a world of exquisitely subtile matter—the Intuitional World, it is called—about and concentric with this physical globe; a world in which all mankind is truly one—where there is seen to be no separation of each from each, yet each is individual and distinct—a Plane of Love *in excelsis,* truly, whence the Christ and the other Great Teachers who have blessed the world with Their presence pour forth Their Life to uplift humanity. "And," in the words of a teacher, "think of the infinite patience of it all; the unwearied watching that no opportunity should be missed for giving help in any possible way the human mind or heart should require. But how few of those who believe that He lives and watches over them, can tolerate the idea that the Buddha lives and watches too, that Krishna, and Zoroaster, and all the great Ones who have lived and worked on Earth for human good, live on and watch. More difficult still to believe that not only does the Christ watch over Christendom, but that He pours out His help and blessing not only on all

who love the Father of our common manhood, but also on all who strive for human betterment no matter what their religious belief or disbelief. And not only does the Christ do this, but all His brethren join with Him in the common task."

Students of the Sacred Occultism know how this help from the inner worlds is given. It is not figurative, remember; it is very definite and is a fact. And right here, lest you wonder why progress in evolution is not speedier under these conditions, I will tell you, in the words of another, a very important spiritual truth; and that is, that "*so reverent is even God Himself to that Spirit which is Himself in man, that He will not even pour into the human soul a flood of strength and life unless that soul is willing to receive it.*" What a wealth of significance in these words! What a reversal they imply of the ordinary view of the Christian Church as to punishment, Divine Sacrifice, Man of Sorrows, original sin, the Church as mediator, and all the other strange perversions of the original teachings of the Christ!

The human will is free—inherently free;

it may receive or it may reject. Most certainly is our Divine Father not endeavoring through the Christian Church to *force* us to come to Him; rather has He, through one of His mighty Helpers, established the Christian religion as one of the many opportunities of which His children may avail themselves to so develop themselves that He may the more fully manifest Himself in them and lavish His Love upon them.

The human will, I repeat, is free, fundamentally free, and given a desire to attain a knowledge of the Divine Order of Things, no church is absolutely necessary to this end. I say this with all reverence, wishing to indicate to you that we should not feel that a mediator is necessary between God and our inmost hearts; we are all inherently divine, and a church, as I have said, is but an opportunity, though a great one, to enable us to reach inward to the Holy of Holies within ourselves. Far be it from any spiritual teacher to decry the ministry of any religious sysem; he would naturally and pre-eminently exalt this ministry, yet is he compelled to asseverate that *there is even no religion higher than*

Truth; and where a religion, through priestly corruption and the ravages of decay, teaches doctrines that stunt the soul and stultify the intellect, he feels it a duty to point out its shortcomings and aid in its rehabilitation.

Remember, please, we may receive or reject, according to our light; and in furtherance of this thought let me say that he who rises in true greatness of any sort above his fellows, is or is capable of drawing upon a reservoir of spiritual force and knowledge in the inner worlds, which is being constantly augmented by the Great Adepts: *inspiration comes ever from above, is not built up from below by reasoning.* Hence would we rise in spirituality, we must by purification of ourselves—that is, by elimination of our selfishness—become more and more responsive to the divine influences ever pouring forth upon us.

Everyone is clothed in several bodies of superphysical matter corresponding to the matter of the inner worlds, and hence is in constant contact with those marvelous realms where thoughts are things—and

thus is it ever possible to receive help from within;* it depends upon ourselves alone—we need no Divine Victim to intercede for us with a harsh Father whose characteristic attitude seems that of placing obstacles in the way of our growth.

In closing I will repeat that the true Atonement, in respect to the Christ, is not the taking on of the sins of mankind, but the understanding of and sympathy with mankind through a common nature, by which the Master is able (by means of His wonderful occult powers) to give strength, purity and wisdom to gradually replace the weakness, sin and ignorance of mankind.

Thus are we to look upon the Christ as an Elder Brother and exalted Helper ever present in the inner worlds (even though He does even now possess a physical body), and ever working, by means of His own powers and through initiated disciples, not only through the Christian religion, but through all religions and in all ways of the

*See Vol. V: "The Mystery of the Self and the Houses It Lives in."

nature of teaching, for the uplifting of humanity. And the association of Him with the symbol of the cross comes from the conception of Sacrifice which has ever been connected with the cross. The sacrifice of the Christ lies in foregoing the ineffable bliss of the Spiritual World (sometimes called the Nirvanic World), the highest plane or realm with which humanity as humanity can have aught to do, and remaining in these lower regions—the Physical, Astral and Mental Worlds—in order to be of service to us, His younger brothers, toiling on behind Him. This sacrifice to such as He, however, can have in it no element of pain; for Him it is a privilege—a joyous giving forth, even as our common Father, the Solar Deity, gives forth in these His worlds.

And as for Him who was the Jesus of the Gospels and whose development into Mastership might well have been typified (though of course grossly) by the suffering Figure on the cross, He too is a Christ (an Anointed One) now, and is, like His Master, sacrificing Himself gladly for His suffering brothers traveling the Path He was instrumental in defining. He is, as I have

mentioned, living at present among a favored people in the general region of the Holy Land, though He has been seen among the haunts of men in certain countries of Europe. And His beautiful and tender, yet dark and strong countenance, and His graceful, stately figure, are enhaloed with the irradiations of His nobly-sought and gloriously-achieved Divinity. A Lord of Compassion, a Comforter, He has now the Christian Religion as province and fief. His the inspiration that urges onward the Higher Criticism, that His religion may be freed of its error; His the grace that fills to o'erflowing the hearts of His younger brothers; His, together with His Master's, the knowledge and the power that endow with magical forces the sacraments and the ceremonies of His true fanes; and His the courage and His the devotion that help to sustain the seeker for the Way and him who is upon it—the ancient "strait gate and narrow Way,"—the Path that lies beyond sainthood—the Path of Holiness—the Path of Initiation—the Path of Perfection—the Path that leads to At-one-ment—the Path which you and I shall some day tread.

156103A

MAR 17 1960

FLEX BINDING